

Upper Michigan Source

What's government's role in helping to lift people out of poverty?

[Kristine Frazao](#)

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“The system is broken!” That’s the rally cry heard repeatedly after recent violence in Baltimore.

Despite hundreds of millions of dollars handed out by the federal government each year to make improvements across the country, there’s been little progress in improving poverty rates, education scores and job creation.

Still many look to the Federal Government to take a more active role. Rep. Donna Edwards (D-MD) said on Fox News Sunday more money for schools is needed.

However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the city of Baltimore ranks number three in the country, spending \$15,287 per pupil. (That’s less only than New York City Schools, which spends \$20,226 per pupil and Boston, which spends \$19,720 per pupil).

Here’s the U.S. Census Report where more information on this can be located:

<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2014/cb14-95.html>

The U.S. Census also reported 25.2% of people in Baltimore City live below the poverty line - \$23,492 for a family of four. (November 2013 US Census)

Compare that to the rest of the state of Maryland, where only 10.1% live below the poverty line or the federal poverty rate: 14.5%.

Michael Tanner, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute has been studying the War on Poverty for years..

He said Monday, ““The poverty rate today is about the same as it was when we started in 1965 so you can’t say we’ve gotten a whole lot of bang for our buck.””

Among his research, Tanner found the federal government operates 126 different poverty

fighting programs at a cost of about \$668 billion dollars.

<http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/PA694.pdf>

Tanner believes there are some things the federal government can do to help.

“Government can create the conditions under which jobs flourish - that’s low taxes, low regulation, the type of thing that encourages entrepreneurs to come in and create the jobs that are really going to last over the long term,” he said

But it’s unfair to say social safety net programs as a whole aren’t working.

The pew Charitable Trust did a study and estimated 50% of senior citizens would likely live in poverty, were it not for Social Security (instead only about 14.6% do).